

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KHARTO 01210 111128Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 (ISO)W
-----111226Z 023168 /17

R 110927Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4106
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMCONSUL ASMARA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

S E C R E T KHARTOUM 1210

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SU, ET
SUBJECT: NIMEIRI VOICES SUPPORT FOR ERITREAN INDEPENDENCE

REF: STATE 079945 (NOTAL)

1. DURING FRIENDLY, HOUR-LONG PRIVATE TALK APRIL 9, I TOLD NIMEIRI DEPT. HAD BEEN WATCHING SUDANESE DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS IN HORN/RED SEA AREA CLOSELY. WE WERE OURSELVES CONSIDERING HOW BEST LEND SUPPORT TO MODERATE ARAB EFFORT. SECRETARY VANCE HAD RAISED ISSUE OF SOVIET AFRICAN POLICY IN HIS MEETINGS IN MOSCOW. WE WERE PLANNING OPEN CONGEN IN DJIBOUTI APRIL 25. NIMEIRI REPLIED HE WAS GLAD HEAR THIS. HE CONFIRMED SUDAN WOULD ALSO BE OPENING DIPLOMATIC CONSULATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

2. PRESIDENT THEN SAID: "I AM HELPING ERITREANS TO GAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE". ALL GUERRILLA ELEMENTS WERE BEING PERMITTED

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COME AND GO FREELY BUT NIMEIRI ASSERTED ARMS AID NOT RPT NOT BEING PROVIDED, SINCE SUDANESE STOCKS INSUFFICIENT. CLAIMING SUDANESE DO NOT LIKE ERITREANS, PRESIDENT NOTED THERE NO QUESTION SUDAN DESIRING TO ACQUIRE ERITREA. RATHER, IDEA IS TO FACILITATE ESTABLISHMENT INDEPENDENT STATE WHICH WOULD SEAL OFF "ABYSSINIA" AND ITS SOVIET-INFLUENCED LEADERS FROM RED SEA.

3. WHEN I ASKED WHETHER ERITREAN FACTIONS COULD BE PREVAILED UPON UNITE, NIMEIRI RESPONDED THAT GUERRILLA FORCES IN ERITREA WERE ALREADY COLLABORATING MILITARILY. "POLITICIANS" OUTSIDE HAD NOT SO FAR SHOWN SIMILAR FLEXIBILITY BUT THIS WOULD COME. NUMBER MILITARY SUCCESSES HAD RECENTLY OCCURRED AND MORE WOULD FOLLOW. EPMG WAS CRITICIZING NIMEIRI PUBLICLY AND OCCASIONALLY FIRING INTO SUDANESE TERRITORY BUT PRESIDENT CLAIMS THESE WERE SIMPLY "DEATH THROES" OF MENGISTU REGIME WHICH INCREASINGLY EMBROILED WITH ITS OWN PEOPLE, "ERITREANS, TIGRES, GALLAS".

4. NIMEIRI CLAIMED HE WAS NOT RESPONDING TO EPMG PROPAGANDA ATTACKS, NOR HAD, ANY SUDANESE TROOPS CROSSED ETHIOPIAN BORDER. HE SAID HE WANTED GIVE EPMG NO GROUND ON WHICH RALLY AFRICAN SUPPORT BY ALLEGING SUDANESE "INVASION". REFERRING MONITORING REPORTS ETHIOPIAN MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS, PRESIDENT SAID ETHIOPIAN ARMY COMMAND AND CONTROL IN BORDER AREAS BEGINNING DISINTEGRATE. "THEY ARE JUST RUNNING", PRESIDENT ASSERTED. HOWEVER, HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN AT WHAT HE SAID WAS SPEED WITH WHICH SOVIET ARMS REACHING EPMG, CLAIMING SPECIAL SHIPLOAD ABOUT TO ARRIVE. MOREOVER YUGOSLAVIA HAD RECENTLY PROVIDED EPMG WITH SUBSTANTIAL SHIPMENT SMALL ARMS, WHICH NIMEIRI SAID WAS PUZZLING VIEW BELGRADE'S NON-ALIGNED ROLE AND PAST GOOD YUGOSLAV/SUDANESE RELATIONS.

5. NOTING SOME OF GUERRILLA GROUPS NOW ENGAGED VERSUS EPMG ARE NOT ERITREAN, I ASKED WHETHER SUCH ELEMENTS MIGHT, ASSUMING THEY WERE TO WIN, BE WILLING ACQUIESCE IN INDEPENDENT ERITREA. NIMEIRI REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT EDU HAD AGREED SUPPORT ERITREAN "SELF-DETERMINATION". IF HE WERE ERITREAN HIMSELF, HE WOULD
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WANT TO WAIT AND SEE WHAT POSITION MIGHT BE AFTER PRESENT ADDIS GOVT. WERE CONQUERED. HOWEVER, NIMEIRI THOUGHT EITHER AUTONOMY OR INDEPENDENCE COULD BE ATTAINED BY ERITREANS AND THAT CHOICE WOULD ULTIMATELY BE UP TO THEM.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT MADE NO MENTION ANY NEED FOR SPECIFIC RED SEA SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, SUGGESTING THIS RUBRIC LARGELY SEEN AS FACADE. HE CLEARLY EXPECTS SUDAN GOVT'S MAIN AIM SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION ERITREAN INSURGENCY AND ISOLATION OF A LAND-LOCKED SOVIET-BACKED "ABYSSINIA" - CAN BE ACHIEVED. WHILE NO TIME-TABLE MENTIONED, SENSE OF NIMEIRI'S COMMENTS WAS TO THE EFFECT THAT THIS AIM CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IN RELATIVELY FEW MONTHS AND WITHOUT RISKING ANY SERIOUS COUNTER-MOVE BY MENGISTU REGIME.
BREWER

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NNN

Message Attributes

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